



CITY COUNCIL

Public Safety Committee

Tuesday, November 7, 2011

Council Office

7 p.m.

Committee Members Attending: D. Sterner, Chair, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, J. Waltman

Others Attending: V. Spencer, L. Kelleher, C. Geffken, C. Younger, C. Weidel, R. Natale, W. Heim, K. Kulp

Mr. Sterner called the Public Safety Committee meeting to order at 5:47 p.m.

Citizen Service Center Implementation Update

Ms. Weidel distributed the October Citizen's Service Center (CSC) Report showing for October a total of 1,127 resolved service requests and 349 open service requests. On average the report shows the following over the past (5) months:

- Missed Trash and Recycling Pickup: Approximately 230
- RAWA Service Requests: 430
- Codes Service Request: 320

In October, 570 Codes Service Requests have been resolved and 119 remain open and 499 RAWA service requests have been resolved and 52 remain open.

Ms. Weidel stated that CSC staff is currently working to identify new per capita tax eligible individuals using the Codes tenant listing. She stated that CSC is also working in coordination with Berks EIT to identify new and unlicensed businesses.

The Committee next discussed the City's approach to collecting Business Privilege tax, Business Privilege licenses and LST from employers and employees.

Quality of Life Ticketing Implementation Report

Mr. Geffken reviewed the report issued by Mr. Kersley, the City's Business Analyst. He stated that of the 436 Quality of Life Ticketing Appeals, 39% have been granted with the fines refunded. He stated that year-to-date 3,252 tickets have been issued for accumulation of rubbish or garbage,

5,326 tickets were issued for high grass/weeds, and 2,170 tickets were issued for no storage containers for waste. To date \$580,250 in fines has been assessed. He noted that, from a trending perspective, the number of tickets issued in October, a total of 1,489 were lower than the 1,512 tickets issued in September. He added that delinquent notices were mailed to property owners with past due violations and unpaid violations will be turned over to a collection agency in December.

The breakdown of violations by Council District is as follows:

- District 1 (year-to-date): 984
- District 2 (year-to-date): 826
- District 3 (year-to-date): 2,665
- District 4 (year-to-date): 1,970
- District 5 (year-to-date): 2,886
- District 6 (year-to-date): 2,095

Mr. Sterner inquired about the ability of Codes to reduce the number of Property Maintenance Aides while Codes staff is being ramped up to handle the new Housing Permit Ordinance. Mr. Natale stated that the Codes Department is beginning to focus on the need to provide in-house abatement rather than using a more expensive outside contractor. He stated that Property Maintenance Aides will be outfitted with a variety of tools such as weed wackers so they can abate the situation with the bill for services going to the property owner.

Mr. Geffken stated that the cost of the program is covered by the incoming revenue; however he noted that if the program is successful fewer tickets will be issued and the Property Maintenance Aides can be reassigned.

Ms. Kelleher inquired about the availability of a Codes Map that can show Quality of Life and/or Codes violations. She noted the importance of having the ability to overlay this data with the Police Department's crime data.

Storm Cleanup Update

Mr. Geffken stated that the City is working to develop a drop off location for debris from the storm two (2) Saturdays ago. He stated that in the meantime property owners need to chop and bundle debris and separate it from leaves for collection.

Property Maintenance: Code and Plumbing Code Amendments

Mr. Natale stated that he is working to purchase a license from the ICC which will allow the City to add our local amendments to the 2012 ICC Code.

Ms. Kelleher stated that Ms. Butler explained at a previous meeting, that former Legal Specialist Michelle Mayfield had been working with the Plumbing Inspector on the Plumbing Code amendment. Ms. Butler was going to follow-up with Ms. Mayfield to find out the status of the

amendment process.

Ms. Kelleher stated that one (1) of the amendments being considered is allowing the use of PVC piping in homes rather than copper. Mr. Natale explained that PVC can be used only if the home's entire electrical system is totally rewired. He noted that copper is used as a ground for the old existing electrical system.

Housing Update

Ms. Kelleher and Mr. Natale asked City Council to consider adopting the Housing Permit Ordinance sometime before the end of the year. The ordinance will have an effective date in January 2012. Mr. Natale noted that the budget before Council contains approximately nine (9) Inspectors to fill the initiative in the Housing Permit ordinance and the separate Certificate of Transfer ordinance. Both ordinances are noted in the Act 47 Recovery Plan and in the Housing Strategy. Mr. Natale stated that Codes is already beginning to undertake some of the initiatives listed in the Housing Strategy.

Ms. Kelleher suggested the following breakout of backlog hearings that need Conditional Use approval:

- Independent Hearing Officer hearings for properties in high-density residential zones with one (1), two (2), three (3), and four (4) units approximately 571 hearing (hearings for properties in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts will be referred to Council's Conditional Use hearings)
- One (1) or two (2) members of Council splitting the hearings for properties with five (5) or six (6) which is approximately 66 hearings or 33 per Councilor
- Full Council hearings for properties with seven (7) units including rooms and above, and all properties in the R-1 and R-2 low density zones, approximately 20 hearings

Mr. Geffken reminded Council that the recommendations from the one (1) or two (2) members of Council and the Independent Hearing Officer will be referred to the full body of Council for rejection or approval.

Ms. Kelleher expressed the belief that the need for the hearings will be phased as it is entirely unlikely for approximately 700 property owners to submit applications at the same time.

The Committee requested a copy of the breakout sorted by Council District. The issue will be discussed again at the December Public Safety meeting.

The Public Safety Committee adjourned at 7 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk

Issues for Follow-Up:

- Ordinance to adjust vending machine annual fees
- Ordinance to create a vending machine program
- Set timeframe to finalize the pending zoning applications
- Include the False Advertising Statute in the City's HOusine Strategy currently under development
- Report from HPO Team re Vacant Properties & Requirement for Property Insurance
- Demolition of Outlet building facing 9th Street at 9th and Windsor